

Voluntary - Public

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## Germany

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### Traffic Light Food Labeling Appears in Germany

**Report Categories:**

Food Processing Ingredients Sector

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**Report Highlights:**

A leading German frozen food company has voluntarily started using the traffic light system for food labeling. This decision has initiated a new public discussion about the pros and cons of simple food labeling schemes in Germany.

**General Information:**

In the beginning of June 2009, one of the leading German frozen food producers, Frosta, became the first German company to voluntarily label its products with a traffic light food labeling system. This particular food labeling system is a highly contentious issue in Germany. The food industry association (BVE) opposes the system as well as any mandatory requirement that will force it to use a food labeling system. In the past, the Federal Ministry of Agriculture (BMELV) also rejected a compulsory traffic light labeling system. BMELV and BVE claim that the traffic light system can be misleading (i.e., many bread varieties would receive a red label because of its relatively high use

of salt). Consumer organizations and left-leaning political parties like the Social Democrats Party, the Green Party and the Left Party, on the other hand, support the traffic light system. They claim that such a system is simple and easily understandable. These organizations do not accept the argument that the traffic light system could be misleading.

Nutrition labeling is a very popular topic in German media and frequently debated in roundtable discussions on TV. The food processing industry is very concerned that this topic may be abused for populist political campaigns. The German Parliament is not expected to decide on any nutrition labeling schemes in the near future. However, in the current pre-election environment, the industry wants to prevent politicians from making promises in which they will have to implement if they are elected. As a proactive approach, the industry is engaging in an intense dialogue with regional politicians to educate them about the non-scientific approach of simple traffic light food labeling schemes.

The Frosta company is highly engaged in applying popular customer response systems. Frosta is also proud of being among the first food companies in Germany to have developed a carbon footprint calculation program for several of their products.